

In Washington, Snooping Is a Major Industry

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THE CIA and the entire U.S. "intelligence community" has found itself on the spot in public, not only for disobeying a Presidential order and storing some deadly poisons for five years, but for a far more serious error — misreading the events leading up to the Arab-Israeli War of October, 1973.

In an action that touched off a confrontation with President Ford, House Intelligence Committee Chairman Otis G. Pike (D-N.Y.), a tough, no-nonsense lawmaker from Riverhead, L.I., made public top-secret briefing papers provided then-President Nixon on the eve of the Yom Kippur conflict of 1973.

The papers showed that U.S. intelligence agencies told Nixon that military activity by both sides was merely "maneuvers" or "exercises." What's more, the papers indicated that even after the war started on Oct. 6, 1973, the agencies persisted in their error, telling Nixon and his top advisers: "We can find no hard evidence of a major, coordinated Egyptian-Syrian offensive across the (Suez) Canal and in the Golan Heights area."

To Pike — and to others on Capitol Hill — the briefing papers raised the crucial question of whether the nation is getting full value for the more than \$6 billion it spends each year on intelligence-gathering operations through the CIA and half a dozen other top secret outfits.

While the heavily publicized hearings of the Senate Intelligence Committee, headed by Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho), garnered the headlines with displays of CIA poison dart guns and reports of zany schemes to make simulated zerm attacks on the Sixth Ave. subway, it was Pike's committee that posed the key questions: Is what we get worth all that money? Are we getting so much trivia that policymakers are overwhelmed with what intelligence officials call "background noise" and fail to hear the danger signals?

When Assistant Attorney General Rex Lee appeared before Pike's committee to urge a "return to the traditional approach" of dealing with intelligence matter in Capitol Hill, the Long Island congressman snapped: "That is what is wrong, Mr. Lee. For decades, other committees of Congress have not done their job, and you have loved it."

Too-Friendly Persuasion

The "traditional approach" has meant that "the executive branch comes up and whispers in one friendly congressman's ear or another friendly congressman's ear, and that is exactly what you want to continue, and this is exactly what I think has led us into the mess we are in."

What Pike plans to do is to analyze how the U.S. intelligence community has been doing its basic job. And in light of its record on the Tet offensive in Vietnam in 1968, the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 and the October, 1973 Mideast war, the Pike probe may be the most dangerous of all for the CIA and its allies.

Far from being a minor activity of government, the gathering of intelligence looms as one of Washington's biggest industries. Besides the CIA and the FBI, an alphabet soup of other federal agencies are engaged in trying to find out what's going on, both at home and abroad.

There's the National Security Agency (NSA); Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA); the various investigative, security and spy services of the Army, Navy and Air Force (including something called the "National Reconnaissance Office" that is so secret its very name used to be classified); Secret Service; the Internal Revenue Service's Intelligence Division; Customs Service; Drug Enforcement Administration; the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms of the Treasury (the "revenueurs" who hunt down moonshiners, among others); Postal Inspection Service; the Treasury Department's intelligence service; and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's intelligence service (formerly the Atomic Energy Commission's spy shop).

In addition, there are a number of other agencies with intelligence functions: Agency for International Development (AID); U.S. Information Agency; Federal Communications Commission; and the Departments of Commerce, Interior, Agriculture and Justice.

Then there are the files that various agencies keep on American citizens. The U.S. Civil Service Commission, for example, has more than 15 million names in its "security" files. Gumshoes from the commission's Bureau of Personnel Investigations are active all over the United States, interviewing the references given by prospective federal jobholders, probing deeply the backgrounds of those seeking so-called sensitive posts.

Even the Department of Transportation gets into the act. It has an electronic dossier of almost 3 million Americans who have even had a driver's license suspended or revoked. And one of its semi-independent agencies, the National Transportation Safety Board, sends investigators to the scene of every major transportation disaster — air, land or sea — to search out "probable cause."

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Division, 300 and \$10 million, the Nuclear Regulatory Agency's intelligence division, 300 and \$20 million; and Treasury Department intelligence, 300 and \$10 million.

Adm. William F. Raborn, who was director of Central Intelligence from 1965 to 1966, once defined the difference between "intelligence" and "information" as the "process of evaluating the accuracy and assessing the significance in terms of national security." And that, basically, is the job of the U.S. intelligence community.

The keystone of this community — although it does not have the largest number of personnel or spend the most money — is the CIA. Headquartered in a seven-story marble fortress surrounded by asphalt parking lots in Langley, Va., across the Potomac from Washington, the CIA is responsible under law only for putting together jigsaw pieces of raw information and evaluating them as to security and significance. Of course, it does much more than that and, as the nation and the Rockefeller Commission have discovered, few government agencies have taken such liberties in interpreting their legally assigned functions as the CIA.

About 4,800 of the CIA's estimated 16,500 employees are in "clandestine services," that is, spying. But the agency also hires thousands of foreign agents to gather information, and it has

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